CLAIMS

I claim:

1. An apparatus for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites in order to optimize the sale of similar items, comprising

    a. a website server computer connected to the Internet, and

    b. a database on the website server computer for storing data about items that have previously been sold on various e-commerce websites, and

    c. database management software for maintaining said database, and

    d. application software for allowing a user to request information from the database about previous sales on e-commerce websites of items similar to the one that the seller has for sale.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further including agent software that, at regular intervals, searches various e-commerce websites to obtain data on sales about various items.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, further including agent software that, at times determined by a seller, searches various e-commerce websites to obtain data about sales of various items.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, further including TCP/IP connection software for enabling the application software to communicate over the Internet with a seller at a remote computer.

5. The apparatus of claim 2, further including TCP/IP connection software for enabling the agent software to communicate over the Internet with an e-commerce website.

6. The apparatus of claim 3, further including TCP/IP connection software for enabling the agent software to communicate over the Internet with an e-commerce website.

7. A method for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites in order to optimize the sale of similar items, comprising the following steps:

    a. accepting a detailed description from said seller about said items for sale,

    b. examining a database for information about similar items that have previously sold at e-commerce websites,

    c. determining that said database contains information about said similar items and extracting said information,

    d. presenting said information to said seller

8. The method of claim 7 including:

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a. querying said user for a format in which said information is to be presented and

b. presenting said information in accordance with said format.

9. A method for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites in order to optimize the sale of similar items, comprising the following steps:

a. accepting a detailed description from said seller about said items for sale,

b. examining a database for information about similar items that have previously sold at e-commerce websites,

c. determining that said database does not contain information about said similar items,

d. starting agent software to search e-commerce websites to gather information about said similar items that have previously been sold at said e-commerce websites, and

e. storing said information that has been gathered by said agent software into said database.

10. A method for updating a database with data from e-commerce websites about the sale of various items, comprising the following steps:

a. starting agent software at regular intervals to search e-commerce websites to gather information about said various items that have previously been sold at said e-commerce websites and

b. storing said information that has been gathered by said agent software into a database.

11. A method for updating a database with data from e-commerce websites about the sale of various items, comprising the following steps:

a. providing a detailed description of an item,

b. providing a set of search parameters,

c. providing a list of e-commerce sites,

d. searching said list of e-commerce sites according to said search parameters,

e. retrieving information from said e-commerce sites, using said search parameters and said detailed description, about said item, and

f. storing said information into a database.